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Chapter II

REVIEW OF PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES - UNCTAD'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION

(Agenda item 5)

(continued)

1. The representative of Somalia said that the dictatorial régime of General Siyad Barre had been ousted through a popular uprising spearheaded by opposition groups. During the few weeks preceding this long-awaited collapse, General Siyad Barre's army which had enabled him to brutally repress the Somali people for the last two decades, had indiscriminately shelled the capital city and looted substantial private and public property. Regrettably, those barbarous acts had resulted in the death of tens of thousands of defenceless civilians and the displacement of over one million people. Against the background of this tragic situation, men of courage and vision had come forward to establish an interim Government pending free multi-party elections. The new administration had, as a matter of urgency, embarked upon restoring peace and order. Furthermore, the Government had already declared a general strategy of rebuilding a new republic based on national unity, social justice, respect for human rights and political pluralism. In this regard, Somalia looked forward to the understanding and support of the international community at a time when Somalia was undergoing a crucial transition from tyranny to democracy.

2. The representative of Ethiopia expressed deep concern over the continued deterioriation in the economic and social conditions in the least developed countries, despite the efforts deployed at the national and international levels to redress the situation as envisaged in the Substantial New Programme of Action for the LDCs in the 1980s, which had been a lost decade for the LDCs. The main lesson from the experience of the 1980s was that more vigorous efforts had to be exerted not only at the national but also at the international level in order to arrest the worsening of economic and social conditions and eventually lay the foundation for sound development in the LDCs. Ethiopia therefore attached great importance to the Paris Declaration, as well as the United Nations Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s, the success of which would depend on their timely implementation. He emphasized that, as the focal point for the follow-up of the implementation of the Programme, UNCTAD would play an active role of crucial importance.

Hence, it had to be adequately strengthened and embark upon the follow-up activity as early as possible. He was confident that UNCTAD would fully discharge its responsibilities in the crucial phase of the implementation of the Programme. Finally, he expressed his appreciation for UNCTAD's efforts in the preparation for and conduct of the Second United Nations Conference on the LDCs.

3. The representative of Myanmar said his delegation was pleased to note that, despite the short span of time since the Conference and the adoption of the Programme of Action, the UNCTAD secretariat had managed to undertake a number of measures in fulfilment of its global monitoring role. He also noted that steps were being taken to expand technical assistance activities and that a number of projects were in the pipeline. This showed the desire and determination of UNCTAD to fulfil the enhanced role in the context of the review, monitoring and follow-up of the Programme of Action that had been entrusted to it by the Paris Conference and the General Assembly at its forty-fifth session. He welcomed the announcement by the UNCTAD secretariat that the Special Programme for the LDCs would be upgraded.

4. Those steps and initiatives taken by UNCTAD constituted measures that would hasten the transition from the SNPA and would set in motion the Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s. The need to start the implementation of the Programme of Action was indeed very urgent. The social and economic situation of the LDCs as a whole had worsened during the 1980s, despite national and international efforts on their behalf, and it was a cause of concern that this trend had continued during 1989-1990. What was really worrisome was the pessimistic view shared by many with regard to the LDCs' socio-economic prospects in the coming years. It was only with timely and adequate external support that the LDCs would have a chance of overcoming their situation and improving their chance of success in their efforts to initiate comprehensive policies and measures in pursuit of the provisions of the Programme of Action.

5. The representative of Finland, speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that the Nordic countries had welcomed the adoption of the Programme of Action and that, from the point of view of UNCTAD, the follow-up of the Programme was of particular importance. The Nordic countries welcomed especially the new ideas contained in the Programme which underlined the importance in the development process of broad participatory development, including the increased integration of women in economic, political and social

life, and respect for human rights. As regards the implementation of the Programme, the Nordic countries foresaw an important role for UNDP and the World Bank at the national level. It was of vital importance that the UNCTAD secretariat involve relevant United Nations organizations and bodies in the follow-up process. It would be useful to have information about the co-operation arrangements envisaged in this respect by the secretariat and also about its plans for reviewing the implementation of the Programme in terms of the new qualitative aspects he had mentioned. The follow-up mechanism for the Programme rested very much on the shoulders of the UNCTAD secretariat, and the decision of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to upgrade the Special Programme for LDCs was to be welcomed. The planned consultations among the LDCs themselves was also an important part of the follow-up process.

6. The representative of Nepal noted with satisfaction the statements made by the representatives of the UNCTAD secretariat outlining the future steps for implementation of the Programme of Action and, in this connection, welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to upgrade the UNCTAD Special Programme for Least Developed Countries.

7. A process of democratization had recently taken place in his country. A new constitution had been promulgated and an election based on the multi-party system would be held in May 1991. Nepal would continue, throughout the 1990s, to concentrate on an important development strategy, namely poverty alleviation. Special emphasis would be laid on restoring trade balances, control of population growth, the protection of the environment, the fostering of complementary relationships between the government and the private sector, the integration of non-governmental organizations in the development process and the promotion of indigenous skills, supplemented by measures of mobilization of domestic resources. However, in order to implement these plans and programmes, the newly established Government would no doubt need increased external aid and other international support, which he hoped would be forthcoming during this decade within the framework of the Programme of Action.

8. The representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) said that the LDCs and their peoples represented one of the organization's main concerns and that it was accordingly orienting its policy and concentrating its efforts so as to optimize the utilization of its resources in favour of the LDCs. A country-specific initiative had thus been launched whereby all WHO programmes were to be co-ordinated both at central and regional levels in order to

intensify technical and financial co-operation with these countries. A special forum on health had been organized by WHO with UNCTAD on the occasion of the Paris Conference. In implementation of the resultant Programme of Action, the WHO Executive Board had in January 1991 adopted a resolution on "Health promotion for the development of the LDCs" which called for the continuation and intensification of the organization's efforts to provide support for the strengthening and development of health systems and identifying resources and new approaches to health in the current social and economic context. The WHO initiative had permitted the development of a new kind of international partnership, based on country-oriented strategies and improved co-ordination. A number of countries and United Nations organizations had already become involved in this approach aimed at overcoming obstacles to the effective implementation of primary health care. Three observations could be drawn from a first evaluation of this integrated approach. Firstly, close links were developed between social and economic sectors and between health and macro-economic policy, and co-operation was fostered between national authorities in these various fields. Secondly, joint programming and partnership in various consultation mechanisms served to mobilize the technical and financial means needed to implement operational plans of action. Finally, a coherent, long-term approach was required for integrated technical and financial co-operation, within which WHO accorded particular importance to the economic management of the health sector.

9. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said that, following the Second United Nations Conference on LDCs and in the light of the UNDP Governing Council's decision of June 1990 to allocate to the LDCs 55 per cent of the indicative planning figure (IPF) resources during the fifth programming cycle (1992-1996), a ten-point multi-faceted approach had been adopted. This approach included the following elements: bringing the priorities of the Programme of Action to the attention of the LDC Governments in the course of discussions on the preparations for the next country programme, defining a funding strategy for UNCDF to reach 20 per cent annual growth, assisting LDC Governments in preparing technical co-operation assessment needs and programmes, establishing strategies and programmes for the development of the private sector, defining strategies for the full participation of women in the development process, encouraging LDC Governments to involve non-governmental organizations through their specific role in formulating and implementing programmes and projects geared to promoting

grass-roots activities in LDCs, preparing strategies for human resources development, strengthening LDCs' capacity for adequate socio-economic management with emphasis on the long-term perspective for development as well as on capacity for effective aid co-ordination, calling LDC Governments' attention to the Programme of Action and its follow-up and monitoring mechanism and proposing a calendar for the preparation of a round table to be held within the next 12 months, and strengthening the substantive capacity of UNDP field offices to backstop the round table process, with particular emphasis on economic management activities. In this connection, a workshop on round table issues and procedures would be held in Geneva from 1 to 3 May 1991. The results of this workshop were expected to be useful in determining UNDP's response to the call made in the Programme of Action for the round table process to become more systematic and better organized. In conclusion, he reiterated the commitment that UNDP had made to ensure the successful implementation of the Programme of Action for the LDCs in the coming decade.